

This is the first of three major planning applications for Sawbridgeworth but with specific legal obligations in common. Last year I chaired a Shaping Sawbridgeworth Masterplanning Steering Group. This was up made of District and Town Council members as well as residents. Many of the concerns raised are reflected in the planning obligations and conditions requested in each of the applications.

The overwhelming concerns of members and residents raised during Masterplanning are with the road and environmental impact on what is essentially a narrow country lane. The A1184 is already designated as an area of poor air quality. Many of the houses especially on the north side of West Road have no drive or front garden. Cars are parked in the road and on pavements, forming obstructions to the traffic flow. I Recently I received a copy of a video from Hertfordshire Police taken by a resident showing several cars driving on the footway owing to the narrowness of the road and which I forwarded to the committee. While this is an existing situation this is the footway that will most likely be used by around 140 children and their parents on the way to Mandeville school from the new developments and therefore must be addressed along with other highways interventions associated with the developments. I believe the high bank between the development and the school could be reduced in width and be held up by a retaining wall enabling the road to be widened.

With regard to the junction of West Road and Station Road it is stated that a signalised junction is the preferred solution of the highways authority. I have been lobbied by residents, motorists, and businesses who are concerned that even an intelligent junction could add to congestion, poor air quality, and adversely impact businesses ability to trade. I'd like members to note that I have had assurances from Highways that they will be looking again at the design of the junction to advise what improvements are possible and to ensure they are for the benefit of all users. The latest Highways response of the 23rd January identifies possible alternatives and also that the Highway Authority is prepared to negotiate an adjustment of the headline Section 106 contribution as any remaining monies will be used to fund improvements to walking and cycling links as identified by the Highway Authority within the Sawbridgeworth Walking and Cycling study. I commissioned the study ahead of these applications because I didn't want the default position to be for people to jump in their cars to go to town, the station, or school. It is really important therefore that capital funding is prioritised for pedestrian safety and access both along West Road and at the junction with Cambridge Road and Station Road.

Now just a few words on the legal obligations. Preschool and organisations supporting youth activities such as scouts and guides and youth clubs are at capacity already and cannot support demand from an additional 560 homes in the town. It is vitally important that the levels of funding suggested in the legal agreement are maintained but with the addition of support for community transport. I'd like to suggest therefore that the delegated authority referred to in the recommendation on page 258 is done in

consultation with the Shaping Sawbridgeworth Steering group which includes local members across the three local authorities.

In summary,

An appropriate improvement to the West Road, Station Road junction that enhances pedestrian safety

Possible road widening between the development and the school to improve pedestrian safety

For the delegated authority to include consultation with the Shaping Sawbridgeworth Steering group on the legal obligations.

Finally I'd like the Steering Group to have a continuing monitoring role as the developments progress to ensure all conditions and obligations are observed and if necessary enforced for the benefit of all existing and future residents.